

The **BLUE JAY**



BULLETIN
of the
SASKATCHEWAN NATURAL HISTORY
SOCIETY

In Co-operation with
The Saskatchewan Provincial Museum

The Blue Jay

Quarterly Bulletin of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society

Founded by Mrs. Isabel M. Priestly

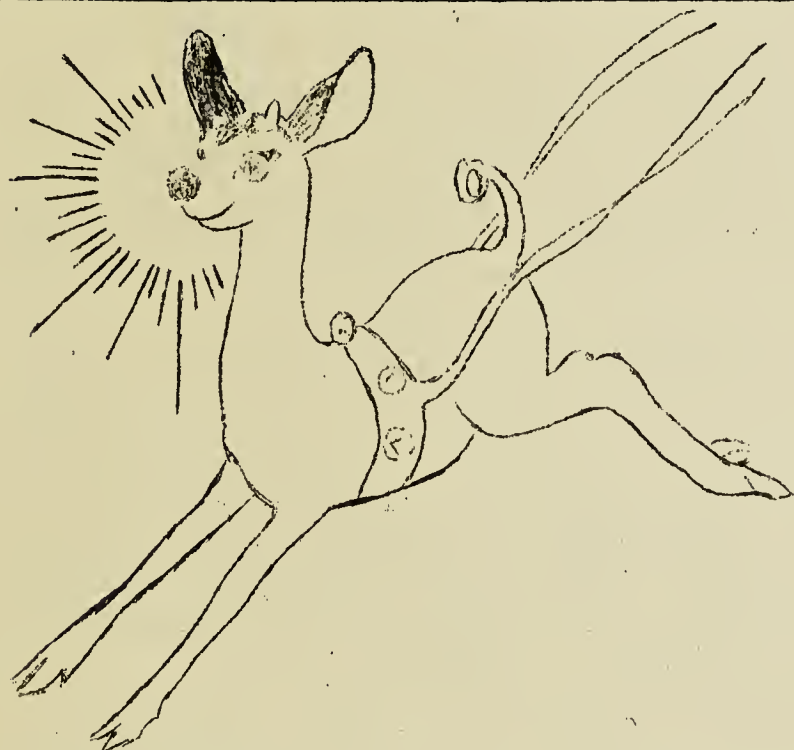
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No. 4



Most of us have no desire to live in a land of perpetual summer. It is the changing of the seasons which adds interest and beauty to the world about us. Remembrances and anticipations go hand in hand in the fashioning of a contented mind.

Now that our songful feathered visitors have left us for a season; now that the gay colours of the wild flowers are but a memory, and the leaves of the trees are painted and gone; now as so many of our native animals rest comfortably in hibernation while the cold winds

whistle and the snow crystals fall, we can still look about us and enjoy the gifts that nature has to bestow.

It was John Murray Gibbon who wrote:

"I see the fairies of a winter's night
Float from the tree-tops to the path below
And pattern laces with the clear moon-light
And shadows of the branches on the snow."

Not only are we surrounded by the shining splendor of the snow flakes, the bright stars in the sky and the contrasting colors of nature, but hardy animal life is with us also, feeding on dried berries and seeds, or gambling in the moonlight on the snow.

Splendid in their plumage, birds from the north come to us again, braving the prairie winter in company with the permanent residents of our animal life. More especially among the trees in the sheltered valleys, and in the bluffs of the parkland, wild life is still present in abundance to all who have the desire and stamina to search out in their usual haunts.

The Christmas season, coming during this period of short cold days and long nights is, like Rudolph, a light showing us the way. It brightens our lives, takes the sting out of winter, opens our hearts to a greater

consideration, not only of mankind, but of all wild life which solicits our aid. It is a reminder that lengthening days are here again, and that once more, as always a new spring is soon to be born.

To all our readers we wish a bright and happy Christmas and good hunting in the fields of out-of-doors.

THE ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting and convention of the Society, held this year in the auditorium of the provincial museum was an outstanding success. 101 members registered, a number of whom came from distant points.

Mr. Cliff C. Shaw was elected president, succeeding Dr. G. F. Ledingham, who last year acted both as president and business manager. Maurice Street, of Nipawin, was named 1st vice-president and A. C. Budd, of Swift Current, 2nd vice-president.

Morning, afternoon and evening sessions were held. The topics discussed by the various speakers were of particular interest to all nature enthusiasts, and the splendid slides shown in color and explained by running commentaries, were exceptional, both from an artistic and instructional point of view.

The ladies of the Regina Natural History Society were hosts to the members and visitors, and served dainty lunches during both the afternoon and evening sessions.

The delegates were welcomed by Fred G. Bard, director of the museum, and by Fred S. Robinson, president of the Regina Natural History Society. Nature lectures, illustrated by colored slides were given by F. S. Robinson, Fred Lariman, and Doug Gilray, all of Regina; Cliff Brown of the Dominion Entomology Station at Indian Head, and C. C. Shaw of Yorkton.

A. C. Budd of Swift Current, spoke on methods of plant collecting and preservation; A. J. Hudson of Mortlach on Archaeology in the Sandy Creek district; Arthur Ward of Swift Current, on forestry and methods of bird banding; Lloyd Carmichael, on Saskatchewan species of goldenrods. Other speakers were Dr. G. F. Ledingham, Dr. V. Rondeau of Rouleau, W. Yanchinski of Naicam and H. C. Andrews, of Moose Jaw.

The business session was held during the early part of the evening. Of particular interest was the decision to make Mr. Dick Bird a life member of the Society in recognition of the splendid contributions he has made in the field of photography and nature science, to this Society, to Saskatchewan and to all America.

L. T. Carmichael, Editor of the BLUE JAY, reported that the membership as of October 14, was 490; that the total receipts for the fiscal year were \$508 and the total expenditures \$487. The bank balance, not including the \$187, later received from the Dick Bird lecture, was \$80. He also reported that 111 of our members had still not paid their 1949 fees, and made an appeal to the executive to put forth a greater effort, not only to get new members, but to retain those which we already have.

The following out-of-town directors were elected for the three-year term:

L. T. McKim, Melfort; E. W. Brooman, Prince Albert; H. C. Andrews, Moose Jaw; E. W. Van Blaricon, Tisdale and A. J. Hudson, Mortlach.

Regina directors: F. S. Robinson, G. F. Ledingham, F. S. Bard,
W. A. Brownlee and Mrs. W. R. Cruickshank.

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR NEW PRESIDENT

-- CLIFF SHAW --

In addition to the pleasure of meeting with former friends, the annual convention provided the opportunity to become acquainted with many naturalists, friends whom we had previously known only by name. The writer feels sure all of us returned home better informed and with added enthusiasm to aid the BLUE JAY and in so doing share with others the pleasure of nature.

It was gratifying to your executive that within two years the Society has grown from infancy to a robust youngster, as evident by the large attendance from so many districts.

While the convention was highly successful, changes will undoubtedly be made as the society develops. It has been suggested that another year the meeting should devote time for the presentation and discussion of resolutions and possible improvements to the BLUE JAY. Your executive welcomes such suggestions and solicits constructive criticism, so that future conventions can be drawn up in accordance with your wishes.

To those who were unable to attend, we would like to call your attention to a point brought out in the financial report by our editor, Mr. Carmichael. The future of the Society hinges largely on the success of the BLUE JAY. Greater circulation is required to ensure the financial success of the publication. The BLUE JAY is, of course, a mutual undertaking and efforts to add to the number of subscribers should be shared by every reader. May we remind ourselves that no product, much less a publication, sells on its merit without the assistance of a salesman.

Most of us are taking the BLUE JAY because it was recommended to us by a naturalist friend. In turn let us do likewise and demonstrate to our hard-working editor and his staff that we appreciate their efforts.

Your president and officers take this opportunity to express their appreciation to all those who contributed to the success of the 1950 convention.

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ONE OF OUR MEMBERS HONORED

G. Ledingham

Dick Bird, Saskatchewan's noted nature photographer, was awarded a fellowship in the Photographic Society of America at its recent annual meeting in Baltimore, Maryland. Mr. Bird was cited for "outstanding ability in the creation of color motion pictures of bird life and in the field of photographic education." He, following Karsh, the portrait photographer, is the second Canadian to receive this great honor.

At about the same time the Saskatchewan Natural History Society was honoring Mr. Bird with a life membership at its annual meeting in Regina, October 27, 1950. Mr. Bird had read our editor's plea in the last issue of the BLUE JAY. He did something very tangible about it. The October 11 showing of his Camera Trails along Nature Trails was a real treat for all those able to attend. Our society netted \$187. It was Mr. Bird's wish that this money help to keep us going until we could enlarge our membership

sufficiently to remove all financial worries and allow us to improve the BLUE JAY and include pictures. Mr. Bird has given us many new memberships. Let us all follow his example, pay our yearly membership fees and do what we can to attract new members to our society.

In granting Mr. Dick Bird of Regina an honorary life membership in our society we are not thinking primarily of the recent financial boost which he has given us. We are thinking of the more important contributions which he has made to Natural History in Saskatchewan and the whole of North America. His pictures give all who see them an interest in and an appreciation of the beauties and wonders of nature. Mr. Bird's talks which are synchronized so well with his pictures always drive home the lesson that these things are worth conserving for future generations. Many, many times in the last fifteen years Mr. Bird has shown his excellent colored movies to school children or to small church or village groups with little or no monetary return for his hours of patient study and for the use of expensive equipment. His payment then was primarily in terms of the enjoyment which he brought to his audience and the sound basic ideas of conservation which he was spreading.

His reward now is in seeing an awakening appreciation of the beauties of nature and of the value of our natural resources. Growth of our society will be part of this reward, for in no small measure it is due to the fine work which he has done for natural history in Saskatchewan. We know that all the members of our society will be pleased to share in recognizing Mr. Bird's contribution to conservation and natural history, and to wish him success in all his future efforts.

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Prompted by the suggestion of Mr. W. Yanchinski, of Naicam, it has been decided to delay each publication of the BLUE JAY by fifteen days so that each issue will more nearly coincide to the natural seasons. In future the deadline for the reception of material to be printed will be March 1, June 1, Sept. 1 and Dec. 1.

Do not wait until the very last to send in your stories and observations. If left until a late date you may forget the details.

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All matter intended for publication in the BLUE JAY should be written as it is to appear in the magazine, and should be mailed to the Editor at 1077 Garnet Street, Regina.

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This is the time of year to interest new members in our society. We have said this many times before and we will make the request again. Will each member endeavour to get one new member? The appeal is urgent. It seems a simple way to bring our membership to 1000, and with a little effort on the part of each this can be done.

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A limited supply of back numbers of the BLUE JAY are available at 25 cents each.

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THE WHOOPING CRANE

By E. W. VanBlaricom,
Tisdale.

"I've seen a Whooping Crane!"

"When?"

"Less than an hour ago!"

"Where?"

"Down on McKechnie's Lake!"

"Where's that?"

"Six or seven miles south of Valparaiso on section 3. I went down that way this morning to see about some combining. On the way home, there, on the other side of the lake, was Mr. Crane. I had no field glasses. I was all alone. I was afraid of scaring him so came in at once. Can I borrow your field glasses? I am going back."

This was on September 26th, 1950. Kathleen and I had been at our midday meal when, after a decided knock at the door, came barging in our good friend, "Sunny" Arnold, an amateur naturalist and a keen ornithologist - an ardent fan of the BLUE JAY, who lives on a farm where the Hanging Hide Creek crosses Provincial Highway No. 3.

Arnold shouldn't return alone. There should be at least two to verify the find. Three would be better. In a question of minutes it was decided. He'd return in his truck to the farm, gather together his waders and camera and we'd pick him up. For once in a long married life dishes were left unwiped, unwashed and even ungathered. Rain was beginning to fall, but that didn't matter. We'd have gravel most of the way and besides one doesn't see a Whooping Crane every day.

Westward on No. 3 we sped. Six miles and we were on Arnold's farm. He was ready. Into the car went waders and camera and then himself. We were off. Fifty miles per hour is the limit but the road would take it. One mile west of Valparaiso we turned south and before long we were approaching the fairy land of gold and scarlet that surrounds McKechnie's Lake. Over new breaking as far as we could go. We abandoned the car and started to creep towards the lake under Arnold's directions. Fortunately, the bulldozer had piled a screen of roots and brush at the junction of the ploughed land and standing trees. We felt fairly safe from observation.

Slowly we raised our heads. Arnold pointed. Across the lake a quarter of a mile away, directly south of us at the east end of a huge beaver dam was our Whooping Crane! Not alert and on guard as we had expected, but taking his noon siesta. Through the glass we saw the huge white body. Yes, there on the wings were the black markings as plain as could be. The legs? They were not quite visible. Perhaps the water was too deep. Anyway the head and neck would be the key. But these were tucked under his wing. The field glasses passed from hand to hand. Yes, there before us was one of the long sought for Whooping Cranes!

The glasses continued to pass back and forth. Three minutes, four minutes, five minutes. It started to rain. We were getting wet. We were uncomfortable. Apparently he also was getting uncomfortable. He stirred. From underneath his wing came forth a long neck, a big head --- with a yellow fish-net underneath it!!

"I'll be darned! Only a White Pelican!"

Slowly we made our way back to the car. As he stepped in Arnold remarked, "Wasn't it fun while it lasted!"

It was mid-October and cold as we started out for a walk. The golf-course, we thought happily, would be deserted. How green that playground looked as we walked fearlessly across the fairway. But tomorrow it might be covered with snow!

This green mantle which covers the earth, how symbolic of all that is good in man's history! we muse as we hurry along. We view the grass through the soul's eyes of the great philosopher Tagore:

"In the world's audience hall the simple blade of grass sits on the same carpet with the sunbeams and the stars of midnight."

Our thoughts on grass, however, were interrupted as we rounded the bend of the creek. Before us was a flock of Franklin Gulls in flight formation. If the picturesque herring gulls down home can be poetically called "wild orchids of the sea," surely our Franklin Gulls may be called the wild orchids of the prairie. These feathered friends of the prairie farmer are such a joy to watch in flight -- so free, so graceful.

Ordinarily the sight of my dog, we Fogarty Fegan, who loves to chase anything that moves, would have made the birds rise and fly away at once. But these birds were of a different mind -- they remained as they were, three dozen or more airmen obeying a silent command.

Fogey barked at them; they moved a few feet in unison without rising. Cautiously he went nearer -- they moved back as they were.

Feeling like intruders we went on our way. An hour or more later they were in the same position. Homeward bound as we turned on the crest of the little hill to take a last look at the sunset we saw them rise as one and fly into the blazing glory. We felt uplifted as we, in spirit, soared aloft to share with them a glimpse of heaven beyond.

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We had hoped to say farewell again this year to the robins in the same trysting place as last year -- the dry creek bed. These feathery trusting "Robins wearing the feathery fire; whistling their whims on the low fence wire" always pull at our heartstrings. When winter comes, of all the birds, we miss them most. We did not seem them go. But we were partially recompensed.

One bit of the creek still retained water that had attracted some long-legged birds. In the spring we had watched two pairs of Willets house-keeping farther east on the creek shore. We thought the families had had a reunion before leaving here. Coming close, however, we saw that their bills were longer than willits; and upturned.

Pedersen's Field Guide suggested Hudsonian Godwits. As they flew, the white rump and dark under-wing were confirmation. We checked at the museum to make sure. For a week we saw the group, varying in number from one to sixteen. On November 1, the last time we saw them, there were twelve.

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ADVENTURE WITH A CEDAR WAXWING

By Doug Gilroy

It was getting on in July and most birds had completed their nesting duties, but here I was, searching through a green grove of young maples in the hopes of finding new material to photograph with my color camera.

Near the outside edge of the grove and perching on the end of a dead limb was a Cedar Waxwing. "That fellow," thinks I, "is on guard duty; there must be a nest near by." I went on very cautiously peering here and there through the heavy foliage. Suddenly, about three feet away, I spied a little black eye peering back at me from behind a black mask. It was the female Cedar Waxwing sitting on her nest. As she hopped off I was thrilled to see five spotted greyish eggs.

This nest was not more than four feet from the ground and in a lovely setting. What a perfect set-up for pictures. My heart was singing with delight; already I had visions of a perfect shot with the adult bird sitting on the edge of the nest and the five eggs below her.

A few minutes later, and I had a dummy camera placed at a certain angle a scant fifteen inches from the nest. The idea, of course, was that the waxwings would soon find it was a harmless object and go on with their nesting duties as if there was nothing there at all. Later it would be replaced with a real camera and pictures would be made by setting it off by means of remote control.

Two hours later I dropped back again to see how things were going. The area had a deserted feeling; no waxwings could be seen at all. I put my hand in the nest and my heart sank to find the eggs stone cold. Down came the false camera and I departed, hoping against hope, they would return again.

The next morning I visited the spot again; this time I felt even more horrible for the eggs were still cold and clammy. But as I left I felt sure I had a glimpse of one of the parent birds. During the afternoon I stole back and to my delight what did I see but the guard sitting on the twig again. I peered through the branches and there was the female once more on her eggs. Hurrah! The world was bright again. I had not broken up a happy home and maybe I would still get some pictures; only this time I would wait until the young were hatched before setting up any dummy cameras. Then I knew it would be safe, for it takes a mighty lot to make a bird desert once the young have hatched.

A few days passed, then one morning as I dropped by I saw a very lovely sight -- both parents were sitting very close together at the edge of the nest. They were watching the contents of the nest and I'm sure their eyes were shining with happiness, for when I looked into the nest, two young were hatched and another was just breaking his shell.

The next day the dummy camera went up again and all went well this time; in fact, it got so that she would feed her young with my standing less than two feet from the nest and I could now photograph her with no trouble at all. How beautiful she looked at such close range and how interesting it was to watch the method of feeding! She would alight on the edge of the nest with apparently nothing in her bill. Five gaping mouths would greet her; then giving a little gulping motion, an insect would suddenly appear in her bill - this was fed to one youngster; another little gulping motion and a berry appeared - this was fed to the next young one and so it went till all were fed with a various assortment of groceries. This Waxwing experience was one of the nicest I had all summer, and one I shall always remember. The pictures obtained were shown at the annual meeting of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society, October 27.

BIRD BATHS

By L. T. McKim

Mr. Yanchinski's mode of constructing a bird bath is a good one. Here is mine. Place a ring of stones on the ground and hollow the earth out a little. Put in some sand and then shape the pool with cement. For cracks in pools there is a plastic cement mixture which sells for thirty-five cents. I fixed four long cracks in my duck pond in about ten minutes.

On September 16th my wife and I saw the birds listed below around our bird bath and lily pool. The water trickles down over stones into the bath and then into the pool. Birds are attracted by falling water. All but two of the species noted were seen while we ate lunch.

Northern Water Thrush, Red Start, Yellow-throated Warbler, Junco, Song Sparrow, House Sparrow, Goldfinch, Pine Siskin, Hummingbird, Wren, White-throated Sparrow, Warbling Verio, Hairy Woodpecker, Myrtle Warbler, Robin, Solitary Verio, Magnolia Warbler, and another unidentified warbler.

(Surely it must be a record to have so many bird visitors call during one brief lunch period. With this as a goal, dozens of our members will be constructing bird baths first thing next spring, and, wherever possible, will be supplying running water. ED.)

HELP THE BIRDS THROUGH THE WINTER

Want to do the game birds of your area a good turn? Then build them a feeding station and pass out a few free meals, now that the tough part of winter is here.

Your winter feeding station need not be elaborate, but it must meet certain requirements. First, it should be located where birds can come and go safely. The edge of a swale or brushy marsh, a protected corner of a wood lot, and a weed-grown fence row near heavy cover are ideal spots. It shouldn't be placed where birds have to cross open fields to reach it.

A lean-to type of shelter of old boards, brush, evergreen branches, or cornstalks makes a good station. So does a corn shock set up at the edge of thick cover and torn open, with feed scattered inside. Or put grain under a brush heap, a low-spreading juniper clump, or other natural shelter. Be sure your shelter is open so that predators can't trap the birds inside.

Pheasants like ears of corn nailed to boards and placed just above the snow. Wheat screenings and cracked corn are popular fare with quail. Keep the station supplied regularly, so the birds will get used to it.

Game men have learned that a well-fed bird can withstand extremely low temperatures. It is when hunger whittles down his resistance that cold finishes the job.

Give the birds a little of your time and consideration now.

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I noticed with interest, in the last issue, some observations from Mr. Thos. M. Beveridge, R. R. 1, Regina. He was stationed at Red Deer Army Camp for a time during the war, and attended some of the meetings of the Alberta Natural History Society here. I was glad to have word of him again.

-- E.R. Wells, Red Deer, Alta.

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THE CHILDRENS' PAGE

PETER

By Mrs. F. Bilsbury,
Grenfell, Sask.

Helping his dad drive cattle to pasture, my son Gary noted a tiny rabbit hop directly in front of the tractor. He scooped him up and put him in his coat pocket. On getting home he placed the ball of fluff in the palm of my hand. He was very tiny. We taught him to drink warm milk from a saucer. This he managed very well after falling nose-first in. His little legs seemed very trembly.

Being a decided brown we came to the conclusion that he was a bush-rabbit, so called him "Peter Cotton Tail." However, a neighbor insisted he was a Jack -- and he was. He grew, and how he grew! His ears became silver grey, tipped with black. His tail got longer and pure white. His body grew grey too.

Though we could never take Peter in our arms, he was remarkably tame and knew his name, especially when it was time for supper. He ate almost everything; bread and butter with jam, buttered potato, carrots (if cooked), candies, cookies, cake (if iced). His favorite dish was macaroni and cheese. One day a large grasshopper got into the house, so to tease Peter, I offered him the hopper. To my astonishment he ate it. Later he ate a couple more. He was a wonderful pet and very playful, also very gentle unless tired of play; then he would scratch and growl.

Peter was not a very big rabbit and of course got into mischief, namely, he pulled pages from school books. So it was with regret that we felt Peter should have his freedom. On the first of September we released him. He was feeding on some green stuff that had grown up on a little piece of summerfallow, left for the cows. We feel sure that had we called him he would have come to see if we had his favorite cheese.

Perhaps when I write again to the BLUE JAY there will be another little item for our young readers about Peter.

A MOURNING DOVE

By Beverley Janet Sharp

I live on Sec. 6, T. 25, R2, W 2nd and go to Rokeby School. I am in Grade VII and in Nature Study at school we talk about birds, so keep a watch for anything different.

One morning, at breakfast time, we looked out of the window and saw a plump bird that at first glance seemed to be a pigeon. On looking more closely we decided it was a Mourning Dove. This was a great surprise as no one had reported seeing this bird in this district before. The colour on the back and wings was blue-grey. It had a rusty head and breast.

BALLS OF YELLOW FLUFF

By E.K. Jones, Raymore.

On June 30th while driving into town we saw what appeared to be a group of butterflies on the road. However they turned out to be a flock of prairie chickens, not more than two or three days old and appearing like tiny balls of yellow fluff. We stopped quickly or we would have run over them.

There were twelve in all and the mother was fussing and running around trying to get them safely across. They were a wonderful sight and when they had all passed safely we drove on leaving behind the happy family.

THE CHILDRENS' PAGE

QUISCULUS QUISCULA

Quisculus Quiscula, Yorkton's one-legged tourist, is dead. Quis was a one-legged bronze grackle who for the past four consecutive years has spent his summers hopping around the city hall lawn.

Early this fall, caretaker Alex Yacina found Quis stretched out at the bottom of a tree. He took Quis to the city hall basement for treatment, but the old fellow failed to recover.

How Quis lost his leg is a mystery but the good leg carried a small metal band. The band was sent to the American Fish and Wild Life Service, where Quis' obituary will be recorded for science.

Word has been received back that this bird was a female, banded September 4, 1946, by Stuart Houston, of Yorkton.

THE FEATHER-LINED NEST

By Doug Gilroy

I have read of people finding bees asleep in flowers. Here is one about a mouse under similar, yet different conditions.

Around our yard at the farm, the fence posts are of cedar. One of the posts split open, revealing a hollow chamber near the base. A little House Wren wasn't long in finding it and immediately turned it into a summer home -- or should I say, a maternity home, for five young wrens were raised there. As summer waned the wren family packed their grips and departed for the south lands.

A week or so after the departure I was passing by, and for some unknown reason stopped at the post and peered into the opening. What did I see looking at me, with big sleepy eyes, but a white-footed mouse, all curled up snug and warm in the feather-lined nest. This, no doubt, is a common occurrence all over the country -- but I thought it kind of cute.

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YELLOW HORN

This story comes to us for Cowican, British Columbia:

Yellow Horn, a four-year old deer, is getting as domesticated as a cat. For one thing, he's sleeping on a bed most of the time.

The buck had moved in with Mr. and Mrs. G. C. Boyd in this Vancouver Island village. He started by sleeping on the veranda. He didn't take too well to the hard floor and later sneaked into the house at every chance and snuggled down on the bed.

After that, it wasn't long before he was nipping into the kitchen to nibble at a loaf of bread, or a bowl of fruit in the dining room.

Loggers who first adopted him painted the horns yellow for easy identification by hunters.

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FURRED AND FEATHERED FRIENDS AT BIG RIVER By Anne Olson

(We are pleased to welcome as a new member, Mrs. S. O. Olson, of Big River, Saskatchewan. Mrs. Olson is an enthusiastic naturalist and a devoted friend to the wildlife of the North. Her reports will be invaluable as a nature connecting link between the prairie and our great wooded area. We hope to hear from her often. ED.)

Winter seems to be here again in the north. The winter birds come every day for food and for feeding from dawn till dusk. Some years ago I heard rather a good suggestion on the radio regarding their feeding. This idea was to crochet bags from string with a coarse mesh; run a draw-string through the top and fill with suet. The string bags provide the birds with an ample supply of food for days and also prevent the larger birds, such as the Canada Jays, from carrying the suet elsewhere. I fastened an old clothes drier above one of the kitchen windows and have these bags hung from each arm. From an artistic viewpoint, this arrangement leaves much to be desired perhaps, but the number of feathered visitors is ample compensation.

There are innumerable Chickadees, White Breasted Nuthatches, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers that come to the window every day. The Chickadees become very tame, eating from the hand quite readily and perch on one's head and shoulders. Last winter two made a practice of flying into the kitchen any time the door was left open a short time. The Canada Jays will also eat from the hand but it takes time and patience to teach them to do so.

Trays, containing crumbs are always on the window sill. Hazel nuts, when there are any, are there for the red squirrels. Last winter about twelve came for food every day. They were very tame and would eat from my hand and climb on my shoulder. Every evening a pair of flying squirrels appeared at dusk. As there were only two we named them Moonbeam and Batwing. The former would accept food but Batwing refused to come near.

The birds soon come to rely on a plentiful supply of food and become dependent to the extent that if food is not forthcoming they might starve. So it is well to remember that the practice, if started, should be continued without fail.

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On September 21st a flock of approximately forty geese were seen. This is the earliest migration observed during our six years of residence in the north. The next flock passed over on October 18th, closely followed by several for three days.

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There were a great many hummingbirds around the garden during the summer. They appeared to be especially attracted by red flowers and constantly visit the Scarlet Runners and red sweet peas.

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Are Pileated Woodpeckers common in Saskatchewan? There was only one noted here until last spring when a pair were observed. They are frequently quite close to the house.

(Mrs. I. M. Priestly reported in the second issue of the BLUE JAY that Mr. F. Baines had seen a Pileated Woodpecker, at Tisdale, early in the winter of 1943. Ordinarily this bird is at home in the northern forests and is only rarely seen in the southern part of the province. Mr. C. Stuart Houston in his "Birds of the Yorkton District" has this to say: "A bird of the northern woods, occurring at Crystal Lake. J. Gunn noted only two individuals at Good Spirit Lake in sixty years; one of these was seen in the

autumn of about 1936, the other in the spring of 1942. Also one noted by M. Heintz, in the springs of 1940 and 1941, on a telephone pole in front of Yorkton Collegiate (unverified)."

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SUMMER BIRDS AT GRENFELL

By Mrs. F. Bilsbury

Our summer, in fact, our whole season, has been late from start to almost finish, yet many things have remained quite unchanged in our animals and bird life and again many things were changed.

The Prairie Horned Larks came before the end of January and were very prevalent. The bluebirds came late, long after the snow had gone. One pair, the very first, tried nesting in an outhouse. They had their nest up and four eggs laid, when a terrible hail-storm accompanied by a cyclonic wind overturned the building. They left, but returned with five young. I knew it to be the same pair because the female went to look over her first nesting place.

I notice this season that nearly all songbirds stayed but a few weeks and were seen no more. Robins, orioles, thrashers, a Mocking Bird, thrushes, tree-creepers, warblers and one catbird were seen. Ducks were plentiful and many varieties noted.

Gary, my son, called me to come and see a flock of some twenty or thirty pelicans going south on July 10. These are the first I have seen. We noticed two large flocks of Snow Geese and three or four of Canada Geese and one flock of small dark geese which could have been Lesser Canada going north rather late in the season. Bitterns have been fairly abundant. This morning (September 7) Gary noted a large "blue" or Sandhill Crane in slow flight. One leg dangled so we assumed it had been shot at. Crows seem in goodly numbers and at one time I counted fifty hunting cutworms on a piece of land we knew to be infested. Very few hawks were noted and only one owl.

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NOT EVEN A STUB

By Mrs. J.M.Powell, Lancer.

A small "grey bird" with only one leg has returned to us three summers in succession. On the third summer it disappeared. Perhaps a cat got it.

It was very interesting to watch it balance on one foot, hop along and even scratch for food. When it was windy it would sit down. We could get quite close to it and there was not even a stub near the body.

Several pairs of Baltimore Orioles make their home on our farm since the tree-belt became high and thickly-leaved.

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TYRANNUS KINGBIRD

By A. Ward

The Tyrannus Kingbird, one of the most wary of our birds and hard to trap, never returns here in the spring until about the twelfth of May, when the leaves are well out and insect food available. They are not averse to taking a diet of bees and will sit on the fence to catch them coming to and leaving the hive. With all favorable conditions existing about September 12th, they leave for the south with no apparent pressing reason.

One of these immature birds was banded at Burnham, August 8th, 1949, and was found dead on the street in Swift Current with a broken wing, July 21, 1950.

BANDING BIRDS AT BURNHAM

By Arthur Ward

The Grove has been very lonesome (September 1). No birds have been here for the past few days which have been fine and warm. All the migratory birds observed here to date are two Oven Birds, two Nuthatches, one Redstart and a few immature Clay-coloured Sparrows.

I was interested in receiving the following letter from the Canadian Wildlife Department, Ottawa:

"It was of interest to note that you reported placing band N. 48 - 243432 on an adult male Varied Thrush at Burnham, Sask., on September 27, 1949. Since Burnham is rather far removed from the normal range of this species, we should appreciate any further particulars you may be able to supply that would help substantiate this interesting record."

It would seem that if attraction is widespread there is less means of concentration than is usual around the Farm Grove. This has been very noticeable throughout the year. Water and great quantities of natural food everywhere has directed migration into much broader channels of widespread proportions.

In accordance with these facts banding at this station has been very disappointing. Only 249 birds, of 31 species, were banded. On the other hand outlying districts have greatly benefited by the scattered movement.

It has been noted that over a number of years, the Slate-coloured Junco and the Tree Sparrows are the first to return in the spring, commencing late in March; also that these two species are the last to go south, departing during the latter part of October.

Birds banded at Burnham during 1950, in A.O.U. order: Tyrannus Kingbird (1), Say's Phoebe (3), Barn Swallow (5), Red-breasted Nuthatch (1), House Wren (3), Catbird (7), Brown Thrasher (7), Robin (11), Olive-backed Thrush (12), Orange Crown Warbler (1), Yellow Warbler (12), Myrtle Warbler (13), Oven Bird (1), Wilson Warbler (1), American Redstart (1), Redwing Blackbird (12), Baltimore Oriole (1), Bronze Grackle (1), Pine Siskin (2), Red Crossbill (1), Eastern Towhee (1), Slate-coloured Junco (60), Pink-sided Junco (11), Tree Sparrow (11), Chipping Sparrow (4), Clay-coloured Sparrow (10), Harris Sparrow (2), White Crown Sparrow (37), White-throated Sparrow (4), Lincoln Sparrow (6), Song Sparrow (6), Chestnut-coloured Longspur (1).

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THE GRASS SNAKE AND THE WHITE CROWN

With much moisture and cool weather it was not surprising to see so many snakes and frogs around the garden. On going over to take a bird out of the trap I found a 26-inch snake in with it. Both were so intent on getting out of there that they paid little attention to each other. The bird, a White Crown Sparrow, had been caught and banded before.

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AMERICAN SPARROW HAWK

By C. C. Shaw

The opening of the hunting season in this district, October 2, brought the death of an American Sparrow Hawk. The hunter said he had swung quickly and fired, mistaking the bird for a teal.

C. Stuart Houston, in his "Birds of the Yorkton District," records that the Sparrow Hawk was once a common summer resident, now markedly decreased in numbers. The latest fall date previously noted was Sept. 7, 1945.

BIRD FALL MIGRATIONS AT SHEHO

By William Niven

Winter came earlier this season than for many years. Usually when the lakes first freeze over, they break up again with warmer weather, but this time when the freeze-up occurred November 6, the ice stayed on and the weather has been cold and winter-like ever since.

Despite the fact that it has been a cooler summer than usual the fall migration started about the same time. Sandpipers and Yellowlegs were first noted going over, August 3, followed on August 10 by flocks of Tree Swallows and Canada Geese arriving here from further north. They go to the larger lakes as soon as the young are able to fly and stay all summer, coming back in the fall to feed in the grain fields. Also about this time large flocks of White Pelicans were flying past here every morning and night. During most of the month of August they kept this up - going north-west in the morning and back at night. We were wondering if they were in training for the long flight south. They fly between the lakes, probably going to the large lakes like Fishing Lake to the northwest and Good Spirit Lake to the southeast where there are small fish which they feed on. They were seen last on September 5.

About the last week of August and most of September we had the largest concentration of crows I have ever seen. They do not nest around here so much now, as much of the bush has been removed to make larger fields. But this fall they must have come in from many districts farther north and east. I was wondering if this was because the crops were badly frozen north and east, while they escaped much of the frost here. Anyway, the crows seemed to think it was a great place for them to stay -- plenty of feed and water. They settled down for about three weeks feeding on ours and the neighbours' crops. They can do a great deal of damage when they start, especially when there are about half a million of them, as it seemed to me. After I shot a few and left them on the stooks, the others took the hint and moved further south.

Very cool weather with first light frosts occurred August 16 and 18, which started the migration of warblers and sparrows from the north. The main migration did not come until September. Large numbers of Palm Warblers were noted around September 8. Mountain Bluebirds in large flocks were seen September 11. Pine Siskins were also around in small numbers. September 26 was the end of an extremely warm dry spell. Large numbers of birds were driven down ahead of cold, snowy, winterlike weather. Many warblers passed through. Also many kinds of sparrows, including Harris, White-throated, Tree and Lincoln. Large flocks of Bluebirds, Brewers Blackbirds, Robins, Meadowlarks, Smith's and Lapland Longspurs were seen. About this time cranes and Lesser Canada Geese were seen going southeast high up. On October 28 there was a light snow followed by cold, freezing weather, so the heavy migration was a sure sign of the cold spell to come.

The first Snow Buntings arrived October 20. About this time a Raven was noticed in the district. They had been seen here several years ago but are rather rare in this district. The first Common Redpolls, in small flocks, arrived October 24. A Short-eared Owl was noticed on a fence-post, October 27. They are not often seen here. Evening Grosbeaks in small numbers were seen October 27. The Pine Grosbeaks arrived November 2. The Whistling Swans came down from the north in migration, November 6. They passed right over, non-stop, a sure sign of freeze-up. The lakes froze over this same night and winter started in earnest.

This has been one of the earliest freeze-ups I remember. One Bohemian Waxwing was noted on November 8. So most of the winter residents have arrived.

THE MEADOW LARKS' DEPARTURE

By E. Baker, Regina

All summer the Meadowlarks have again made their summer home in the grass close around my house. About three pairs nested there, but as far as I could ascertain only two birds grew to maturity.

Late in September, as the birds were moving south, a dozen or more assembled for a brief stay. A few more stragglers appeared from day to day, some even sang feeble songs during mid-October.

To my pity and surprise I saw the last group on October 21. The day was cold and they were searching desperately for food. Under the fence and in leaf piles in my garden they managed to salvage some dead grasshoppers. There were four of them. As they rested they were seen preening their feathers in the sun. Joined by two others they departed that day. It is my sincerest hope that they arrived safely at their distant winter homeland.

THE HONEY BOTTLEBy Madeline B. Runyan,
Punnichy

My little Hummingbird returned to drink at the honey-bottle on my window, during early June, and was there from dawn to early dusk all summer with the exception of sixteen days. During this time I feared she had met with grief but concluded later that she was nesting.

On August 26, a stranger appeared at the honey. There were a few sharp battles outside the window and the original bird was routed and did not return. The newcomer, although very nervous, monopolized the honey supply until she migrated on September 5.

I took a very good close-up picture of the bird sipping honey. As yet I have not had a ruby-throated male at the window.

HUNGARIAN PARTRIDGES

These birds seem to have made a come-back. After near extinction at Punnichy, they are fairly plentiful now.

On November 10, as I drove along a prairie road at dusk, I ran onto a flock of these little partridges, feeding on wheat dropped from loaded trucks. As they rose in flight, I was surprised to see a large Snowy Owl rise from a telephone pole and follow them. (This was in the Semans district. The Snowy Owl is seldom seen in the parkland where we live.)

Is October 22 not a very late date for Robins? A small flock was seen here on that date, probably in migration, and certainly belated. (Mr. Jordan will answer this. ED)

AVIATOR OF THE EVENING SKIES

By S. P. Jordan

I don't know how common it is to have a Nighthawk sleep beside your bedroom window ledge, but common or not my wife and I were certainly pleased to have such an intimate visit by this sly and skillful aviator of the evening skies. I don't know if he became hungry or whether the sun became too warm, possibly it was a combination of both, but he left his resting place at 1.30 in the afternoon on August 27.

ROBIN APPRECIATION

By S. P. Jordan

A person tends to take robins for granted in the spring and summer months, for he sees and hears dozens daily. But in the fall as in the early spring, such thoughts as, "Well, what are you doing here all by yourself" bespeak of particularized interest. In other words, your "robin appreciation" so to speak, is somewhat similar to a human's appreciation of his fellows. After the sad passing of a friend one might remark, "Yes, I miss him now that he is gone." In other words the robin gains by going.

The reason for writing the above paragraph is that I thought it would help in explaining my feelings when on a cold wintery day, (November 12) I had the pleasure of seeing a derelict "king of the lawn." He was eating thorn berries, attended by a flock of 20 to 25 Bohemian Waxwings.

SASKATCHEWAN PRAIRIE CHICKEN DANCING GROUNDS

Paswegin -- Centre of N.W. 17 - 35 - 14, W 2nd
 Bladworth -- N.W. 27 - 28 - 1, W 3rd
 -- S.E. 36 - 28 - 1 W of 3rd
 Duval -- S.E. 26 - 25 - 21 W of 2nd
 Wauchope -- S.W. 15 - 8 - 33 W of 1st
 Grenfell (Mrs. Bilsbury) A mile south of farm
 Grenfell (Mrs. Bilsbury) S.E. Section 13
 Regina, 20 miles N.W. -- S.W. 5 - 19 - 21
 Grenfell -- N.W. 25 - 8 - 18 W of 2nd
 Grenfell -- S.E. 25 - 8 - 18 W of 2nd
 Grenfell -- N.W. 5 - 7 - 18 W of 2nd
 Lipton -- S.W. 30 - 24 - 14
 Lipton -- S.W. 13 - 24 - 14
 Clashmore (Reported by E.W. Arnold, of Valparaiso)
 Strasbourg (Reported by Miss Anita Coneybears)
 Saltcoats -- N.W. quarter of T 23 - 3 - W 2nd
 Saltcoats -- Five miles west of town on either side of the road.
 Leask. -- (G.C. Coates farm) -- North edge of T 46 - 5 - W of 3rd

The Saskatchewan Department of Natural Resources would like to learn of the locations of any other Dancing Grounds in the province.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The value of taking a mid-winter bird census as well as keeping a careful record of bird migrations at all seasons was emphasized by Mr. W. Yanchinski at our annual meeting.

This year's bird count will be the 9th consecutive one for the Society and it is our hope that during the last week of the year a new record will be set as to the number of species observed. In 1948, 36 species were observed and last year the total was 24. The total number of species observed to date is 60. No new ones were recorded last year, but in 1948 the presence of Cedar Waxwings and the Pigeon Hawk added two more to the list.

All records of this count should be mailed to the editor not later than January 15. This is necessary in order to give one of our ornithologists sufficient time to check them and to make a summary of the entire picture.

ALL THROUGH A KNOTHOLE

David Clancy, of Vanscoy, is richer by 125 pounds of comb honey and residents report seeing the largest single honey comb of their lives -- all because there is a half-inch knothole in the wall of Clancy's woodhouse.

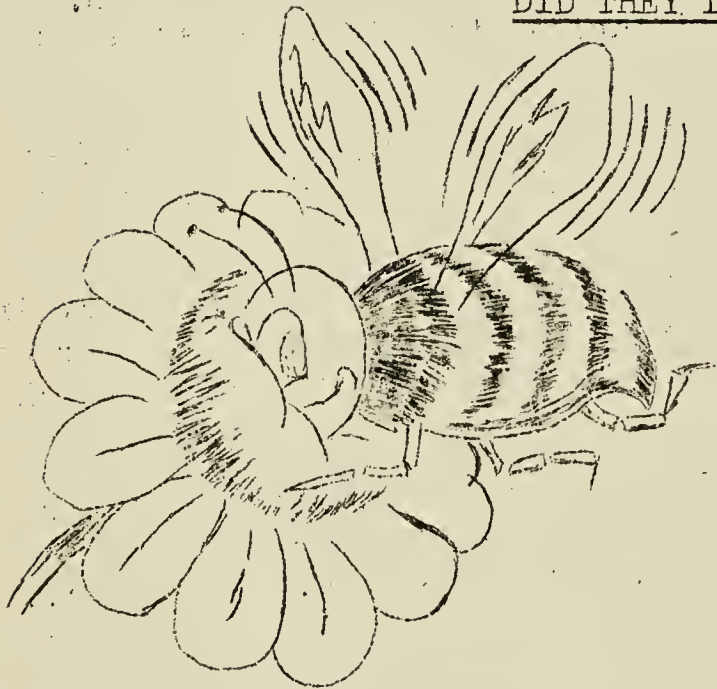
Bees swarmed through the knothole last summer and stayed. They were there in force and as there seemed no way to salvage them, they were destroyed early in September, after which one side of the building was removed.

Clancy found a honey comb two feet wide, attached to the studding, five feet long and complete in width. Part of it had been used for brood rearing, but it was mostly filled with honey. A smaller sheet had been attached to the side wall, so it was broken off when the wall was taken down.

The inside had been lined with boards about four feet from the floor and above that, corded stove wood extended to the roof. About three feet above the lining the comb was attached to this wood as well as to the studding, and was well supported. Smaller sheets were spaced behind the large comb, and also the area between some of the sticks were being filled with comb.

DID THEY IMBIBE TOO FREELY?

By C. C. Shaw



During the evenings of the third week in September, Mr. H.J. Biggs, of Yorkton, noticed that the tall yellow marigolds played host to a dozen bumblebees. As night fell, every marigold had one or more bees nestled deep in the centre of the flower. If the insects were knocked to the ground they seemed to be in a stupor for an hour or more and would then climb back up the stems of the plants. They were unable to fly. As the temperature hovered around 50 to 60 degrees, it would appear as though the unnatural actions of the bees was due to having imbibed too freely from

the flower rather than to a drop in temperature.

A favorite practice of collectors of moths is called "sugaring." On warm, sultry evenings a mixture of stale beer and molasses or syrup is spread on tree trunks. An hour or so later the collector makes his rounds with the aid of a flashlight and collecting bottle and finds dozens of specimens have been stupified by having participated too freely.

Could it be that the nectar of the marigolds is of an intoxicating nature?

THE MORMON CRICKET

By E. Baker

Late this fall I had the good fortune to watch a Mormon Cricket at work in the prairie grass. For the most part it walked rather than hopped, carrying its large soft body well up from the ground, suspended between its strong wirey legs. As it marched along it was busy doing two other things -- singing and eating. Its elevated wing covers vibrated continuously with scarcely a pause as it climbed to the top of low branches of tender green plants and munched at the leaves.

As they usually climb to the top of a bush or weed to broadcast their call, I stood still, hoping I would be the chosen target for the display. One came on across the grass and over a deep wheel track to my very feet. It was baffled when it attempted to climb my slippery shoe heel -- so, with still unbroken song, it marched on into the grass in search of a safer perch.

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BOTANY

THE FALL OF THE LEAF

By A. J. Breitung

It is generally believed that lower autumn temperatures, frost and wind cause the leaves to fall. These are merely contributing factors. Various complicated physical and chemical changes have already taken place within the structure of the leaf itself so that when it is affected by external influences, it is prepared to fall.

The phenomena that separates the leaf from its stem is called "excision." A plane of cells or layer of separation has been formed which has cut sharply through the petiole or leaf stock, at or near its base. It is impossible for the leaf to detach itself unless this layer of tissue has been previously formed.

The dividing plane may be partially formed early in the growing season but it does not reach its full development until nearly the end of summer.

Shorter days, the lowering of soil and air temperatures result in the gradual lessening and final cessation of activity in the absorbent roots. Consequently the stream of sap decreases and ultimately is unable to reach the transpiring leaves.

The protoplasm withdraws from the leaves; the plastids that carried on their activity in the leaf cells have moved to stem or roots and by so doing, have deposited the essential products, such as starch, sugar, etc., in preparation for the following year. The leaves with their now empty cells can easily be sacrificed.

Frequently all the leaves have fallen even before freezing temperatures occur. However, the alternate freezing and thawing of the cell-sap hastens the process, but frost is not the sole agency.

The fall of the leaf is usually hastened by external influences such as wind, rain and frost, or in the absence of these, the weight of the leaf alone will help to bring about the complete excision.

The fall of the leaf, then, is not an accidental occurrence, arising simply from the fluctuations of temperature and the like, but a regular and vital process which commences with the first formation of the leaf and is completed only when it is no longer useful.

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FLASH!!

Cliff Shaw, our newly elected president, was re-elected as president of the Yorkton Natural History Society for his sixth consecutive term, at the annual meeting, on November 21.

Congratulations to an ardent naturalist, who deserves both honours.

FORESTRYBy C. Stuart Francis,
Torch River.

I wish to request everyong interested in the future well-being of our Province to plant as many trees next spring as it is possible to do, especially on the prairie and more open park country areas. I also ask them to refrain from cutting or destroying a single tree in all areas where trees are now growing naturally, unless it is absolutely necessary to do so in order to bring good land into cultivation, or for building sites for some other essential reason.

In locations where the land is stony or sandy or very hilly, it will be found much more profitable growing trees than for any other use. As is often the case at present, the removal of trees from such areas results in the production of nothing but weeds or bare, eroded soil.

I wish also to give a word or two of caution in the proposed planting of trees, and especially of evergreens. It might be a very good idea to find out just what is the present wild rabbit situation in your area and also the outlook for the next three or four years. Rabbits can soon ruin a newly-planted plantation of trees, especially of spruce, pine, tamarac, etc. For this reason, the planting of evergreens or many species of the broad-leaved trees should be timed to coincide with the decrease in the rabbit population cycle. The only alternative is to fence the plantation with high-priced rabbit-proof wire, or to delay planting a few years until the peak rabbit population is passed again.

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AN INVESTMENT IN CONSERVATION

By C.S. Francis

Just over two years ago I purchased a quarter of land, which had a natural water runway cutting through it. The bottom of the runway was covered with coarse wild grass, a few willows and many old beaver dams, beaver runs and deep dry basins. The banks of the runway were grown up to second growth Aspen, Balm of Gilead and willow, but water was to be found in this runway for only a few weeks in the spring and early summer. In the condition that this runway was at the time of purchase, it was unfit for any profitable use. I gave the project a good looking-over and then decided to repair an old beaver dam on the lower end of the runway, near my south boundary.

I hired a big cat-tractor with bulldozer and repaired the old break in the dam. Some of the lower parts were built higher. The cost of this job was \$18.00. Now, two years later, I have a body of water several feet deep at the lower end, and from two to three hundred feet wide. Here, many species of waterfowl nested last spring. Here a family of beavers now live in a very large lodge which they constructed. Here muskrats can be seen swimming about at any time and here, also, are valuable fur-bearers, such as mink and fox. And this great change has come about by a modest \$18.00, "Investment in Conservation." This could be duplicated many hundreds of times in the park and wooded areas of Saskatchewan by anyone interested enough to give our wildlife a chance to help themselves, and at the same time helping to keep our land in the natural balance which prevailed before the coming of settlement.

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ARE SKUNKS SCAVENGERS?

By C. C. Shaw

While driving near Shell River, Manitoba, during September, we were surprised to see a skunk eating a rabbit which had been killed on the highway. Needless to say, we did not stop to form a closer acquaintance but we would have liked to ask Mr. Skunk if scavenging was a family trait.

Perhaps some reader can enlighten us. We have read that skunks are fond of living mice and insects, especially grasshoppers, but this was the first time we have seen one dining on rabbit. The skunk paid scant attention to the heavy traffic, and only moved back a few feet to the shoulder of the road as the cars passed him.

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TWO COUGARS NEAR YORKTON

Two cougars were seen three miles south of Yorkton early this fall, but the efforts of four mounted policemen to locate the animals were unsuccessful.

Bill Harris and his 14-year-old daughter, Myrna, saw the animals at close range as they were walking along a road near their farm home. Judging from their color, Mr. Harris at first mistook them for coyotes, but on approaching to within about 100 feet, saw the distinct features of the huge cats. He immediately returned home and phoned police, but by the time Sgt. Bennett, with four men, arrived, the cougars had disappeared, although one set of tracks was seen heading east along the railway line.

There have been several reports of cougars in the district throughout the summer. In the Norquay district one was credited with killing several sheep and a 450-pound cow. The cow was found with its neck slashed open and the flank chewed away.

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WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?

By M. B. Runyan

Muskrats, which for many years were a curiosity in these dry parts, have taken up residence in the sloughs which have been filled during the heavy summer rains. Where did the rats come from? Many of the farmers hadn't seen one for twenty years, until about 1948 when a few took up residence in new water dug-outs.

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CYANIDE GUNS INEFFECTIVE

The cyanide bombs laid for coyotes proved completely ineffective in the Punnichy district. A dozen were set out in our neighborhood, but not one was touched. The wily coyotes continued their ravages. Now we eagerly await the arrival of the hunter who will put out the poisoned meat. As sheep farmers that is our last hope.

The little fawns fell easy prey to the coyote hordes, and few appear to have survived.

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RECAPTURE PRACTISE

By S. P. Jordan,
Saskatoon.

The coyote, with all his faults, is admired by many for the daring which he exhibits. Certainly there is one such individual in the vicinity of Saskatoon, for, on the morning of September 1, one of the often-called sneaky species, boldly walked up to a hen-house in the town of Sutherland, picked up a fat Plymouth Rock hen, carried her to an open grain field and there, as far as my friend could see, played a game which might be called in coyote lingo, "recapture practise." Satisfied with his skill, he then headed for the Saskatchewan River and disappeared from sight.

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BEAVER AT SASKATOON

Coming from the non-beaver country of Regina (Have you ever walked down the Wascana Valley? ED.), it is quite a thrill for me to see beaver within the city limits of Saskatoon.

Such was my privilege on September 3, for I saw a pair of those mighty "timber-topplers" just below the 25th St. Bridge. Whether this particular pair was responsible or not, is difficult to say, but recently, upon walking along the river bank by the same bridge, I discovered a great deal of "beaver-lumbering" had been done, from old poplars, 30 to 40 years old, down to bushes near the water which appeared to be severed by one clamp of his mighty teeth.

I could find no evidence of storage and yet it seems incredible that such a vast amount could have been eaten. Food, nevertheless, must have been their motive, because there was evidence of much eating, and the construction of a dam at this point of the river would be an absolute impossibility.

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BELIEVE IT OR NOT

A beautiful Silver Fox has managed to exist for two years while roaming within sight of the look-out tower of a neighboring fox farm. His home, so to speak, is a Saskatoon golf course and some of his food very likely comes from the disposal ground of this city's exhibition plant.

How he has managed to live in the face of such great odds is amazing to me. One would think that the dogs or the guns would have killed him long ago. Needless to say, it was wonderful to see him loping through the bushes just as stealthily as his truly wild ancestors had done before him.

I saw this treasured gentleman while playing golf on September 26.

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AN INDIAN LEGEND?By Mrs. T.E. Mudiman,
Swift Current.

I am seeking an Indian Legend about the wild flower called the Tiger Lily (Western Red Lily).

Annora Brown, well known Alberta artist, has under preparation a book on the prairie wild flowers and would like to include a painting of this flower, as it is so colorful. She has tried, without success, to "run down" such a legend among the Blackfeet.

When she heard I was moving to Saskatchewan she asked me to try to find if there were such a legend among other tribes of the Plains Indians. It is such a showy bloom that one would think it should have a story.

Any information you are able to pass along, in this regard, would be most welcome.

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(Perhaps some of our readers have heard of some story or legend about our provincial floral emblem. If so, will you please let us have it, as well as sending the information to Mrs. Mudiman, at 375 Sydney St., E., Swift Current.)

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Mrs. Bilsbury reports that the Lilies around Grenfell met with a sad fate due to the hail storm. However she saw a goodly number along roads and in a clear space on a neighbor's field. One lovely clear yellow specimen was discovered by Louis Hood. He neglected to mark the plant, but is quite sure that he can find the location again next summer.

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GERMANDER AND SNEEZEWEED

By Elizabeth Cruickshank

Flowers add interest and delight to one's rambles. Crossing a high ridge in an unfrequented part of the valley, we saw in the marshy land below, flowers that reminded us of the blue vervain of New Brunswick. As we climbed down the steep bank with difficulty we thought we were to meet old friends, with their long spikes of purple flowers in symmetrical order, branched like candelabra. Our assumption was wrong.

There were the square stems, but the violet flowers had not the tubular corolla with five lobes spread out salver shape but an irregular corolla -- two lipped. Here was the Hairy Germander, a flower new to us, enjoying life in company with the white-blossomed Water Hemlock and tall, stout cat-tails. A plant society we decided to study.

Flourishing in the damp soil near the dam was the Sneezeweed. With its striking large warm yellow flowers, it looked too gay to be the bane of hay fever sufferers. We learned that it derives its common name from the fact that in days gone by, snuff was made from the dried powdered leaves.

The leaves are interesting for another reason. They are stalkless and decurrent, making the stem winged. The adaptation is one to guide unwanted crawling insects away from the flower -- out on a limb!

After a day flower hunting or bird watching, seeing nature's hand-work and beauty everywhere, leaves me always with Carman's thought:

"At last with evening as I turned
Homeward, and tho't what I had learned
And all that there was still to probe -
I caught the glory of his robe
Where the last fires of sunset burned."

THE NATIVE LEGUMES OF SASKATCHEWN

By Arch. C. Budd

In response to several requests an article or articles on the identification of the Leguminosae or Pea family of Saskatchewan is presented. This is a large and important group of plants, well represented in our Province and has alternate, compound leaves, generally with stipules. The flowers are perfect and irregular, with a "standard" or upper petal, two "wings" or side petals and two lower petals generally united to form the "keel". The fruit is generally a legume or a one to two-celled pod, or a loment which is a pod constricted between each seed. The following key will aid in distinguishing the various genera of this large group.

- | | | |
|--|--------------|-----|
| 1. Stamens or male organs separate from each other. | THERMOPSIS | |
| Stamens joined by their stalks into 1 or 2 bundles. | | 2. |
| 2. Leaves even-pinnate, the terminal leaflet replaced by a tendril. | | 3. |
| Leaves with no tendrils. | | 4. |
| 3. Style or female organ slender with a tuft of hairs at end. | VICIA | |
| Style flat with hairs down inner side. | LATHYRUS | |
| 4. Leaves glandular-dotted. | | 5. |
| Leaves not glandular-dotted. | | 7. |
| 5. Leaves palmately divided. | PSORALEA | |
| Leaves pinnately divided. | | 6. |
| 6. Stems mostly basal; flowers small and in dense cylindrical spikes; fruit small and not covered with prickles. | PETALOSTEMON | |
| Stems much branched; flowers large and in a raceme; fruit large and covered with hooked prickles. | GLYCYRRHIZA | |
| 7. Leaves palmately divided into 5 or more leaflets. | LUPINUS | |
| Leaves pinnate or with only three leaflets. | | 8. |
| 8. Leaves with only 3 leaflets. | ASTRAGALUS | |
| Leaves with more than 3 leaflets. | | 9. |
| 9. Fruit constricted between each seed (a loment). | HEDYSARUM | |
| Fruit not constricted between each seed. | | 10. |
| 10. Keel of corolla prolonged into a point. | OXYTROPIS | |
| Keel of corolla not prolonged into a point. | ASTRAGALUS | |

The various genera will be treated in alphabetical order commencing with the large genus of Astragalus or Milk-vetches.

ASTRAGALUS genus. (Milk-vetches)

This is a large genus of which eighteen species are known to occur in Saskatchewan, and in many cases positive identification is impossible without the mature fruit. Some species absorb selenium from soils where this element is present and are then poisonous to cattle and sheep. The following key will help in separating the various species.

- | | |
|----------------------------|----|
| 1. Low, tufted plants | 2. |
| Plants not low and tufted. | 7. |

- | | | |
|--|---|------------|
| 2. Leaflets spine-tipped.
Leaflets not spine-tipped. | (10) <i>A. Kentrophyta</i> | 3. |
| 3. Flowers borne without stalks at the base of the
leaf-stalks or at the crown of the plant. (17) <i>A. triphyllus</i>
Plants with definite flower stalks. | | 4. |
| 4. Leaves simple or with from 3 to 5 leaflets.
Leaves pinnate with 7 or more leaflets. | (4) <i>A. caespitosus</i> | 5. |
| 5. Flowers purple.
Flowers yellow or cream-coloured. | (12) <i>A. missouriensis</i> | 6. |
| 6. Plants densely woolly.
Plants not densely woolly but silky-hairy. | (14) <i>A. Purshii</i>
(11) <i>A. lotiflorus</i> | |
| 7. Plants prostrate.
Plants decumbent at base, or erect. | | 8.
10. |
| 8. Plants with globular or fleshy pods.
Plants with linear pods. | (15) <i>A. succulentus</i> | 9. |
| 9. Pods round in cross section.
Pods flat in cross section. | (7) <i>A. flexuosus</i>
(18) <i>A. vexilliflexus</i> | |
| 10. Plants decumbent at base.
Plants erect. | | 11.
13. |
| 11. Flowers yellow or cream-coloured.
Flowers purple. | (13) <i>A. pectinatus</i> | 12. |
| 12. Pods with appressed hairs.
Pods with spreading hairs. | (2) <i>A. adsurgens</i>
(9) <i>A. goniatius</i> | |
| 13. Pods with two grooves on underside; pods and flowers
crowded and somewhat reflexed. Strong smelling
plant.
Pods with one or no grooves on underside. | (3) <i>A. bisulcatus</i> | 14. |
| 14. Plant loosely long-woolly.
Plant almost or quite hairless. | (6) <i>A. Drummondii</i> | 15. |
| 15. Pods about 1 inch long, pendulous; flowers
white.
Pods not over 3/4 inch long, not pendulous. | (8) <i>A. frigidus</i> | 16. |
| 16. Flowers greenish-yellow, in a dense thick
spike; the flowering stalks extending well
beyond the leaves.
Inflorescence a raceme. | (5) <i>A. canadensis</i> | 17. |
| 17. Flowers less than 1/4 inch long, pale yellow,
in a loose spike-like raceme.
Flowers over 1/4 inch long, whitish with a
mauve or violet tinge, borne in somewhat
elongated racemes. | (16) <i>A. tenellus</i>

(1) <i>A. aboriginorum</i> | |

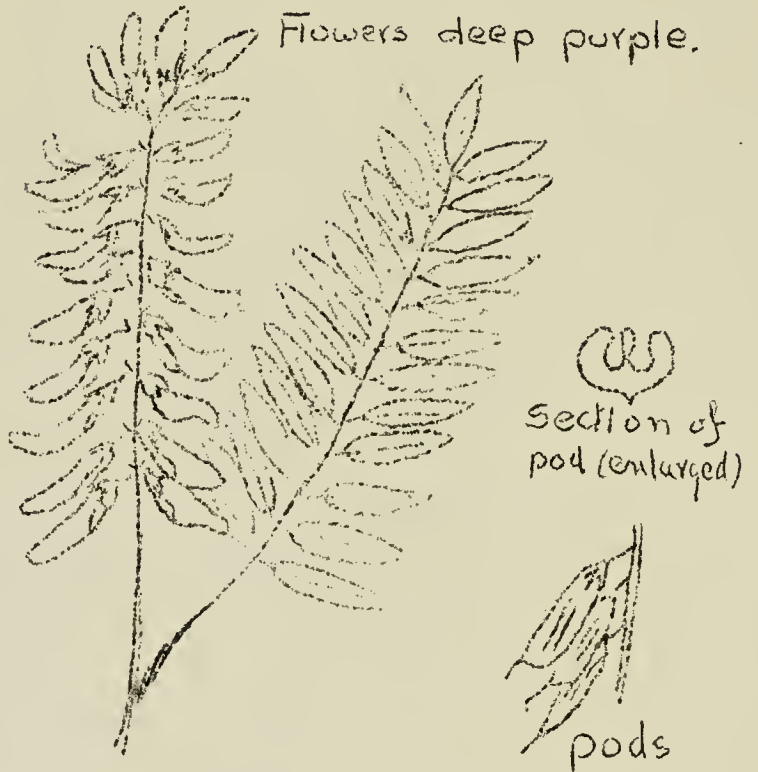
SOME SASKATCHEWAN MILK-VETCHES. (Astragalus)

Flowers
purplish.



Ascending Milk-vetch
(*A. adsurgens*)

Flowers deep purple.



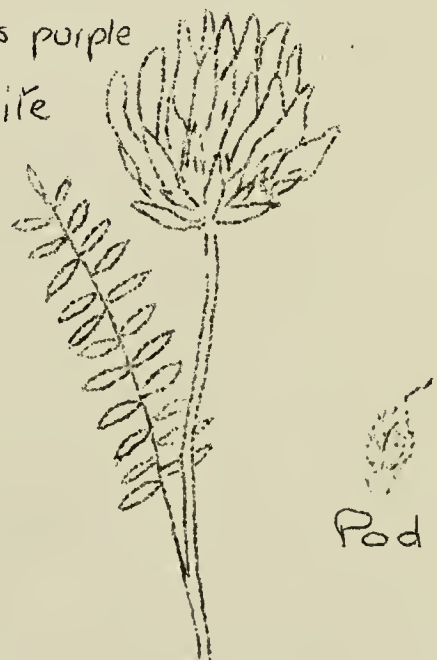
Two-grooved Milk-vetch
(*A. bisulcatus*)

Flowers greenish-yellow.



Canadian Milk-vetch
(*A. canadensis*)

Flowers purple
or white



Purple Milk-vetch
(*A. goniatius*)

(1) Astragalus aboriginorum Richards. (Indian Milk-vetch)

An erect, somewhat branching plant from 6 to 12 inches high, with fine appressed hairs and 7 to 13 linear or oblong leaflets from $1/2$ to $7/8$ inch long. The flowers are white tinged with violet, from $1/3$ to $1/2$ inch long in a rather loose raceme. The pods are slightly inflated, smooth and from $1/2$ to $5/4$ inch long. The long yellow roots were used by the Indians for food. Not common but found occasionally on hills in the southern part of the Province.

(2) Astragalus adsurgens Pall. (Ascending Milk-vetch)

A rather straggling stemmed, erect or decumbent plant from 4 to 18 inches high. The leaves bear from 15 to 25 oval or linear-oblong leaflets from $2/3$ to 1 inch long and the purplish flowers are borne in a short, dense spike at the end of a long stem and are from $1/2$ to $2/3$ inch long. The pods are deeply grooved along the back. A common plant of roadsides, coulee banks and prairies all across the southern part of the Province. It can be mistaken for the much lower growing Purple Milk-vetch but has appressed hairs on the pods.

(3) Astragalus bisulcatus (Hook.) A. Gray. (Two-grooved Milk-vetch)

A stout, many-stemmed, erect plant from 1 to 3 feet high, having a distinctive and unpleasant odour. The leaves have from 17 to 27 elliptic leaflets up to 1 inch long and the flowers are deep purple, about $1/2$ inch long, borne in a dense raceme at the ends of the stems. The flowers and fruit are generally reflexed (pointing downwards). The linear pods are about $1/2$ inch long and have two deep grooves along one side. This plant is very common throughout the southern portion of the Province and can cause selenium poisoning in cattle or sheep on soils which are selenium bearing. It is also one of the host plants of the large blister beetle so destructive to caragana and beans in the garden.

(4) Astragalus caespitosus A. Gray (Tufted Milk-vetch)

This is a very small plant with a somewhat tufted habit of growth, rarely more than six inches high and bearing linear leaves and leaflets from $1/4$ to 2 inches long. The purple flowers are from $1/3$ to $1/2$ inch long and borne in short racemes on an erect stem. Locally found on dry and rocky hillsides in the south-west of the Province.

(5) Astragalus canadensis L. (Canadian Milk-vetch)

An erect, fairly tall plant from 1 to 4 feet in height. The leaves bear from 15 to 31 blunt-pointed, elliptic leaflets from 1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches long. The flowering stems extend beyond the leaves and bear dense racemes of greenish-yellow flowers about $1/2$ inch long and later dense heads of rather woody pods from $3/8$ to $5/8$ inch long. This species is fairly common in moist and shady places almost all over the Province.

(6) Astragalus Drummondii Dougl. (Drummond's Milk-vetch)

This loosely woolly-hairy species grows in clumps from 1 to 2 feet in height and the leaves bear from 19 to 23 oblong leaflets $1/2$ to $3/4$ inch long, softly hairy above and almost smooth beneath. The flowers are yellowish-white with a keel sometimes tinged with purple and are about $5/4$ inch long and borne in racemes from 1 to 4 inches long. The linear pods are membranous and smooth, from $3/4$ to 1 inch long. Occasionally found in the south-west in hilly land.